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NOTES ON MAHAYANA BUDDHISM.

INTRODUCTION.

THE study of Mahayana Buddhism is essentially an interesting one, and this for two reasons. First, because, being as it is the religion of Thibet, China, and Japan, it holds the professed allegiance of about five hundred million people and may therefore be considered as having a larger number of adherents than any other religion. And secondly, and more especially, because of the interesting philosophy which it presents, possessing as it does so many similarities to Christianity, while at the same time teaching many doctrines which are only now beginning to attract the Western mind. Strange to say, however, in spite of all this, the Occident is but little acquainted with Mahayana. During the latter half of the nineteenth century much labor was spent by Orientalists in the editing and translating of the principal works of most of the religions and philosophies of the East, and owing to their diligence and care the Western mind has been enabled to obtain an excellent comprehension of the main modes of Oriental thought. Of Vedantism and the other so-called orthodox schools of Hindu thought, we have a working knowledge, and the same may be said of Hinayana or Theravada Buddhism, but of Mahayana Buddhism modern research has as yet only scratched the surface. Out-

side of a few out of the many thousands of Sutras, or sacred books which Mahayana reveres, and an occasional abstruse work on the subject, this interesting and influential religion is scarcely known to the Occidental world of to-day.

The Common Ground of Hinayana and Mahayana.—First of all, however, in entering into any discussion of Mahayanism, it is necessary to note something of the relations existing between that system and that form of the same faith which prevails to-day throughout Burma, Siam, and Ceylon and which is variously known as Hinayana or Theravada.¹ Speaking generally it may be said that Mahayana holds to everything that Hinayana teaches with the addition of numerous doctrines of its own. Both accept the fact that a Buddha or “enlightened sage” existed in India—though they differ widely as to his date, the Mahayanists putting it at approximately 1000 B. C., while the Hinayanists place it in the latter half of the seventh century B. C. On this point, at least, Hinayana is undoubtedly nearer the truth. Both agree upon the general details of the Buddha’s life, and that his teachings offer a path of salvation for all mankind. Both accept the so-called Four Noble Truths, namely (i) that suffering exists, (ii) that the cause of suffering is wrong desire, (iii) that there is a possible end to suffering, namely the attainment of Nirvana through enlightenment, and (iv) that Nirvana may be gained by pursuing the Noble Eightfold Path consisting of (1) right comprehension, (2) right aspiration, (3) right speech, (4) right conduct, (5) right mode of livelihood, (6) right endeavor, (7) right self-discipline, and (8) right rapture. Both agree upon the doctrines of *anatman*, the idea that while the soul exists it is a combi-

¹ Mahayana signifies the “great vehicle” in contradistinction to Hinayana or “little vehicle” (of salvation). The latter is scarcely complimentary, and so its followers prefer the term Theravada, or teaching of the sages. It is, however, much less prevalent, and for that reason the other word will hereafter be used.

nation of things and not a thing in itself, and of *karma*, "as a man sows, so shall he reap," and of reincarnation.²

The Differences Between Hinayana and Mahayana.—Such, in brief, may be said to be the teachings of Hinayana, and of one phase of Mahayana Buddhism, but in addition to the above, Mahayana maintains the following doctrines which are either ignored or denied by its sister faith.

1. Mahayana teaches the existence of an Absolute, which in its ontological aspect is known as the Bhutatathata ("suchness of existence") and from the point of view of religious consciousness is termed the Dharmakaya,³ the former the impersonal unmanifested God, the latter a personal (though of course not anthropomorphic) and manifested Deity.

2. According to Mahayana every Buddha is to be considered as becoming one in essence with the Dharmakaya, and that therefore his appearance upon earth may be looked upon as an incarnation or reflection of the Supreme.

3. Hinayana holds that personal salvation or Nirvana-ship may be gained by all. Mahayana, however, while distinctly affirming this, declares it to be the privilege and duty of its followers to renounce this and to continue to come back to the transient world for the sake of saving all creatures—in other words to become a Buddha as well as an Arhat.

4. The greater part of the remaining differences between Mahayana and Hinayana may be said to be due to no small extent to the spirit of comprehensiveness of the former. Mahayana declares that all religions are revela-

² For a description of the traditional life of the Buddha, see any standard work on Hinayana Buddhism, as also for a treatment of the above points from the Hinayana point of view, while for their elaboration from the point of view of Mahayana, see the following discussions.

³ For the evolution and meaning of this word see the discussion in the following section (Mahayana Buddhism as Religion).

tions of the Dharmakaya, and therefore attempts to comprehend what it considers to be the best points of all.

Which Is the Genuine Teaching of the Buddha?—

In this connection, of course, arises the question as to which of the two schools approaches more nearly the original teachings of the Buddha. The point is open to discussion, and there may be elements of truth on both sides. For the most part, however, Mahayana scholars admit that as far as what in the West would be called "dead-letterism" is concerned, Hinayana is nearer to the exact teaching of the Buddha, but they maintain that Mahayana has kept what might be termed the spirit even more intact, or in other words, that in aiming after the preservation of the letter, Hinayana has to a large extent lost sight of the spirit, and that therefore Mahayana should be regarded as the truest representative of the Buddha.

However that may be, it may be said that the researches of modern Occidental scholars into early Buddhism seem on the following points to have corroborated in a general way some of the claims of the Mahayanists as to the nature of the primitive faith.

1. Thus, for example, in the very earliest Sutras the distinction between the Buddha and those of his followers who had attained Nirvana seems to have been one of degree rather than that of kind, thus implying the modern Mahayana doctrine that Buddhahood may be aspired to by all, in contradistinction to the Hinayana doctrine that Buddhahood and Nirvanaship are two different and distinct things, the former and higher honor being limited to a certain select few.

2. Again, researches have shown that Buddhism in its early stages in common with all other great religions, was by no means the set and confined thing that it is to-day. Thus we see that the current gods, etc., of India, instead of being rigorously denied by the Buddha, were permitted

by him to be worshiped as long as they did not conflict with his own *dharma* or religion, thus foreshadowing the modern Mahayana conception of comprehensiveness.⁴

3. Nor can the principal other point on which Mahayana differs from Hinayana, namely on the question as to the existence of the Absolute, be considered altogether a corruption, since we find the same idea implicit in Hinayana, while some Hinayanists state it explicitly, though in a somewhat undeveloped form.⁵

I. MAHAYANA BUDDHISM AS PHILOSOPHY.

The Absolute.—As has already been noted, one of the most striking features of Mahayana Buddhism—the point on which it differs most radically from Hinayana, and approaches more nearly the Vedanta philosophy of India—is that regarding its conception of the Absolute. Mahayana is essentially monistic inasmuch as it teaches that all existence is but the manifestation of one substance, or if this term gives too materialistic an idea, of one Ultimate Reality. In that bewildering manner which is common to all Oriental philosophies, this Being has received innumerable names and titles, principal among which are: (1) Essence of Buddhas, as it constitutes the reason of Buddhahood; (2) Dharma,⁶ when it is considered the norm or law of existence; (3) the Bodhi, when it is the source of intelligence; (4) Prajna (wisdom), when it intelligently directs the course of nature; (5) Paramartha, the highest truth; (6) Bhutakoti, when its ontological aspect is taken into consideration; (7) Tathagatagarbha, the womb of the Tathagata (Buddha), when it is thought of in analogy to

⁴ On all questions pertaining to primitive Buddhism, a simple but comprehensive account will be found in *Early Buddhism* by Rhys Davids.

⁵ *Vide* in this connection *Amitabha, a Story of Buddhist Theology*, by Dr. Paul Carus, for an account of the development of the idea of the Absolute in Buddhism.

⁶ For an examination of the evolution of the word Dharma, see footnote 12 in the following section.

Mother Earth, where all the germs of life are stored—and so on indefinitely. The most common name given it, however, is that of Bhutatathata—Suchness of Existence, or simply Suchness.

The Two Realms of the Absolute.—Bhutathata, or the Absolute, is regarded by the Mahayanists as having two states, the conditioned and the unconditioned, or to use the words of Aṣvaghosa, one of the patriarchs and chief authorities of Mahayana who flourished at about the time of Christ, the realm of Suchness proper, and the realm of Life and Death. The former is the unmanifested God, existing “before the beginning,” the latter the soul of existence, the reality behind the universe, and life as it is to-day.⁷

In its former aspect, it is the undefinable, the incomprehensible—the unknowable of Herbert Spencer. It is the root of everything, and consequently it has infinite attributes. It corresponds very closely to the Primal One of Pythagoras, the One, not in contradistinction to the two and the three, but the One which includes all the other numbers. Mahayana, carrying out this idea of absoluteness, declares that it would be false to say that it exists or that it does not exist, since existence implies non-existence, and to call it one or the other would therefore limit its absoluteness. Many of the Western philosophers have, indeed, held similar conceptions of the Eternal, but few of them have carried the idea to the length that we find it carried in Mahayana, where we have Aṣvaghosa saying, “Thus we understand that Suchness (in its unconditioned phase) is neither existence nor non-existence, nor that which is at once existence and non-existence, nor that which is not at once existence and non-existence.” In short

⁷ It will be noted that there is a striking resemblance between the ideas here set forth and those which have been formulated by some of the greatest of the modern Western philosophers, notably Spinoza, Berkeley, Kant, Fichte, Schelling, Hegel, etc., Mahayana having features corresponding strangely to certain portions of each one of these.

it is infinite, in the widest sense of that word, and all-embracing, and as such is incapable of ordinary comprehension.

The Reason for Conditionment.—One of the points on which Mahayana, and for that matter all philosophy, is least satisfying, as it itself admits, is on the question as to why the absolute Suchness became the conditioned Suchness, the reason the unlimited should confine itself in the realm of Life and Death. Mahayanists, using the words of Aṣvaghosa, merely say that it came into being spontaneously, which as a matter of fact means little or nothing. Brahmanism affirms that Brahm willed to be two, and that such was the origin of the universe. Mahayana Buddhism does not explicitly state this, although perhaps it implies something very near this when it says that the Dharmakaya or the Bhutatathata is consciously guiding the course of evolution. This, however, but evades the question, since it must next be answered *why* the Bhutatathata willed to be two, and Mahayana is here almost entirely silent, although, indeed, a few of its more speculative thinkers have ventured to say that it did so in order to realize itself. In its absolute condition it can have little or no self-knowledge since there is nothing by which it can measure itself, and so in order to comprehend its own unlimitedness manifested the material world. Thus to the Buddhist, pre-particular Suchness is like a little child ignorant of the world and its ways. Particular Suchness is the man of the world battling with the odds of life. Post-particular Suchness is the man in his prime who has passed through that stage, and is pure, not through ignorance of impurity, as in childhood, but by having learned through experience how to withstand it. "Thus life will necessarily march onward to Buddhahood, actualizing in the course of its development the eternal in the transient, the omnipresent in the special, the universal in the concrete

and particular, and unchangeable perfection in the imperfect haphazards of the kaleidoscopic world of changes.”⁸

The Method of Conditionment.—But though according to the Mahayana, Suchness is unlimited, and therefore one (for duality would imply relativity as opposed to Absoluteness), yet, nevertheless, in order to explain the method of the manifestation of the material universe, it is forced to declare that inherent in this unity there are two aspects, namely the aspect of enlightenment and the aspect of unenlightenment or ignorance, or to use more familiar verbiage, of matter and of spirit. According to Mahayana the whole of existence comes from the action of ignorance upon enlightenment, or the all-perceiving mind. Aṣvaghosa compares the method of creation to be like the action of the sea. The ocean is the all-perceiving mind (the *ideas* of Plato), ignorance is the wind (Plato’s $\mu\eta\ \delta\nu$) and by the action of the wind upon the water, the waves or the material worlds appear. Hence Mahayana declares that absolute Suchness may be said to be in one sense the same as the world, and in another sense not the same, just as “the water can be said to be identical in one sense, and non-identical in another sense, with the waves. The waves are stirred up by the wind, but the water remains the same. When the wind ceases, the motions of the waves subside, but the water remains the same. Likewise when the mind of all creatures which in its own nature is pure and clean, is stirred up by the winds of ignorance, the waves of mentality appear. These things, however, have no absolute existence and are neither unity nor plurality.”

Mahayana, then, may be said to occupy a middle position between those who affirm and those who deny the existence of the material universe. It affirms that it exists but denies that it has an absolute existence—that it is a

⁸ Paul Carus, Introduction to Aṣvaghosa’s *Awakening of Faith in the Mahayana*, tr. by T. Suzuki.

thing in itself, maintaining as it does that it is but a manifestation of the Bhutatathata, just as the waves may be said to exist, yet not to have an absolute existence. The world is an illusion, says the Mahayanist, but as an illusion it must be said to be.

Impermanence.—Mahayana Buddhism, and all science and philosophy for that matter, teaches that at any rate as far as the external world is concerned, everything is impermanent and subject to flux and change. There is no such thing, as far as our knowledge goes, in the material world which is a thing in itself, all things being but combinations or complex things. Thus, for example, we are all aware that there is no such thing as a stove or a table in itself, each being but a combination of parts, parts of sub-parts, sub-parts of molecules, molecules of atoms, atoms of electrons, and so on until we get back to the final ether, the only thing which may be said to have an absolute existence.⁹ Now being a combination of other things and not a thing in itself, that stove or that table is bound sooner or later to destruction, for it is an axiom both of Buddhism and of science that only simple things are permanent, a complex thing being in its very nature bound to be dissolved, although this dissolution may be put off indefinitely.

Universal speculation has of course admitted this fact, but the Indian philosophers, and for the most part also the schools of the West, have made two important exceptions to this rule of flux, namely, first the devas, or in Christian verbiage the angels, and secondly the souls of men and women, and even (though this is denied by Christianity)

⁹ It must be admitted that on the point of the existence of an absolute or thing in itself, Mahayana is more logical than its sister faith, Hinayana, which officially either ignores or rejects it. There must either be many absolutes (atoms), or one absolute (ether). Mahayana, then, is justified in holding that there is at least *an* absolute, and modern science would seem to confirm its assertion that there is *only one*, since the atom, which only a few years ago was universally regarded as indissoluble, has now been broken up.

those of animals and vegetables. Buddhism, however, both Hinayana and Mahayana, carries this idea of universal complexity and therefore of universal impermanency to its utmost length, and declares that even these are combinations and consequently subject to change. Not only do they exclaim with Heraclitus "No one can step twice into the same river," but they also hold that no two thoughts can be thought by the same man.¹⁰

Suffering and Sorrow.—Owing to its frank acceptance of this idea of impermanency, Buddhism is often accused of being pessimistic, but this (certainly as far as Mahayana is concerned) is only partially true. It is often claimed that Buddhism teaches that all life is suffering, but as a matter of fact, Buddhism only proclaims that the conditions which accompany life are also capable of producing sorrow. Thus, individuality is in itself no evil, but the conditions which make for individuality also make for death, disease, and poverty.

Buddhism, however, openly admits (as every one must) that there *is* suffering in the world. What household, says the Buddhist, is there which is free from death, sickness, or dishonor; what person who can say that his life has been made up of unalloyed joy—even among wealthy and noble families? Everywhere, he will point out, may one see misfortune and privation, everywhere is there disease and despair, practically everywhere do poverty and want prevail, and while it is an axiom that no condition is so bad but that it might be worse, yet all must agree that the present age, while in many respects far superior to any

¹⁰ It would be a mistake to infer from this that Mahayana teaches that there is no such thing as immortality, for although immortality in the sense of eternal identity is denied, immortality in the sense of eternal continuity is universally affirmed. For a further and more detailed discussion of this perplexing problem of the persistence of the personality, which has proved such a stumbling-block to the vast majority of Occidental students of Buddhism, of both branches, see the discussion of Mahayana as Psychology in regard to the human soul, and the paragraph on the Devas or Gods in the discussion of Mahayana as Religion.

of which we have any knowledge, is nevertheless far from perfect—that while conditions might certainly be worse, they might certainly be better.

Nirvana.—So far, indeed, does Buddhism agree with the pessimists, but unlike pessimism, it is urgent in its proclamation that this sorrow may be ended; that there is a path which every one may tread and which will permit each one to rise superior to all adversity—namely, Nirvana.

This doctrine of Nirvana has been much misunderstood by Western critics of Buddhism. It was first of all considered to be equivalent to annihilation, though some argued that personal individuality remained after death and that Nirvana was a sort of heaven. As a matter of fact, Nirvana has a far wider significance than either of these conceptions. It means simply a mental attitude—a state of mind which can be attained here on earth. In other words, a man, after seeing the childishness of both the joys and the sorrows of ordinary earthly life, may rise superior to them, and by fixing his mind on things eternal, raise himself into a sort of religious ecstasy, which, notwithstanding that he goes about his every-day duties, will remain with him throughout life.

In Hinayana, fixing the mind on things eternal means merely seeing the worthlessness of material things, but in Mahayana it signifies, above all things, an understanding of and devotion to the Absolute. It is said that the Buddha in a former state of existence sacrificed his life to gain the stanza:

“All component things are transient,
The law is to be born and die.—
Transcending birth and death,
How blissful is the Absolute.”

In other words, each one may share in this bliss of the Absolute even while on earth; when he has become iden-

tical with the universal norm, he realizes his universal presence in all things.¹¹

Buddhahood.—Nirvana is the highest goal to which Hinayana teaches its followers to aspire, a state of personal happiness and salvation. It is more or less a question of each one for himself, and the devil take the hindmost. Mahayana, however, goes beyond this conception. It teaches indeed, that personal Nirvanaship may be, and often is, gained, but it also proclaims that it is possible for one who desires to do so, to renounce this personal bliss in order that he may continue in the world to help its inhabitants out of the misery and sorrow which are everywhere apparent. Such a one is in Buddhist phraseology a Bodhisattva. Every Bodhisattva, however, must finally reach the stage of perfect and supreme enlightenment, or Buddhahood, the highest honor to which any one may aspire. To the Buddhas everything is laid open, all the secrets of nature are unveiled, and what can only be believed in by ordinary humanity, is by a Buddha finally understood and realized. Unlike Hinayana, which, while teaching that the state of Buddhahood exists, holds that its attainment is limited to only a few persons, Mahayana proclaims that it can finally be reached by any one who sets his mind upon it, and teaches its followers to do so.

It must not be forgotten that Buddhahood, like Nirvana, is not a place of existence, but a state of mind which may be attained anywhere, both on earth or in any of the numerous heavens which Buddhism declares to exist. Buddhism is divided on the question as to whether or not the Buddhas continue to have a separate existence after their death, some of the sects and schools teaching that the Buddhas are absorbed into the Absolute, while others main-

¹¹ It will be obvious from this, that Buddhism, unlike certain schools of German pessimism, urgently discourages suicide, since it holds it to be worse than useless to attempt to overcome suffering in this way, the only really possible way, according to Buddhism, being through right rapture.

tain that their individuality persists, and that in a more exalted sphere they continue to use their beneficent influence for humanity at large. It may be said that in Hinayana the former idea is more prevalent, while in Mahayana the latter conception has the greater number of adherents.

II. MAHAYANA BUDDHISM AS RELIGION.

Mahayana Really a Religion.—Buddhism is often spoken of as being more of a philosophy than a religion, and of Hinayana this may to no small extent be true, but of Mahayana such a statement would be but a gross misconception. Mahayana has, indeed, its speculative side, a portion of which we have already examined, but it prides itself on being thoroughly logical and rational. But Mahayana has in addition to this its religious and devotional aspect, and it may even be said that its importance depends more upon this than upon the other, since without it, Mahayana could scarcely hope to hold its influence upon the vast majority of its followers.

In its philosophical aspect, putting aside its acceptance of an Absolute, Mahayana comes very near to its sister faith, Hinayana, but under its religious aspect it approaches nearly as close to Hinduism, and indeed to Christianity, admitting as it does of a triune personal God, of angels, of innumerable heavens and hells, of a substitute for the Incarnation and Atonement, etc. It should not be supposed from this, however, that the religious and the philosophical sides of Mahayana are contradictory or incompatible, for they are in fact but supplementary. It is a fascinating study from every point of view to notice how by gradual development, Mahayana has been able to weld together a philosophical conception which has often been called materialistic, and which is certainly not very far removed from it, and a religious conception which alone would be con-

fused with a system which has often been termed dogmatic and unscientific. Mahayanism is a reconciliation of opposites—a sort of missing link between two different conceptions, and all those numerous persons in the Occident who are struggling in the endeavor to reconcile religion and science would do well to note the results of an unconscious similar effort in the Orient.

The Dharmakaya.—Take for example the idea of God. What Bhutatathata signifies from the ontological point of view, the Dharmakaya (Body of the Law)¹² does from the standpoint of religious consciousness. The Dharmakaya may be looked upon as a sort of aspect or manifestation of the Bhutatathata, and with the Nirmanakaya and the Sambhogakaya forms the Buddhist trinity or Trikaya. Here again the analogy between Hinduism and Mahayana is complete, since Hinduism teaches, it is hardly necessary to say, that Brahm is the impersonal unmanifested God who afterwards becomes manifested in the Trimurti as Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva.

This Dharmakaya is known under many names among the Buddhists of China and Japan, but principally as Vairochana Buddha, and Amitabha or Amitayur Buddha. This Dharmakaya is distinctly a personal deity as conceived by the Mahayanist, even of the more philosophical sects, and is regarded as controlling and guiding the des-

¹² Writing on the definition of the Dharmakaya, Suzuki (*loc. cit.*, p. 62, footnote) well says: "There seems to be a general misconception about the exact significance of the term *Dharmakaya* which constitutes the central point of the Mahayana system. Most Western Buddhist scholars render it the Body or Personality of the Law, understanding by law the doctrine of the Buddha. This may be correct in Southern Buddhism as well as in its historical sense, because after the Nirvana [death] of Buddha it was quite natural for his disciples to personify the doctrine of their teacher, as their now only living spiritual leader. But in the course of time it acquired an entirely different significance and ceased to mean the personification of the Doctrine. Now *dharma* does not only mean law or doctrine but also an individual object, an idea, a substance, or when it is used in its broadest sense, existence in general. *Kaya* means a body or person, but not in the sense of an animated, sentient being; it denotes a system in which parts are connected, a unified whole, that which forms a basis, etc. Dharmakaya, therefore, signifies that which constitutes the ultimate foundation of existence....in a word the Absolute."

tinies of the world, sharing, of course, the Christian deity's attributes of omnipresence and omniscience as well as omnipotence. Through the Bhutatathata, all the material universe is to be looked upon as a manifestation of Him, and in fact He may be looked upon as being the soul of the universe. He—or rather It, for Mahayana scholars reject with some asperity the use of the masculine pronoun in connection with the Supreme—is possessed of infinite love and wisdom, and apparently, through the possession of the *pranidhanabala* (the power of making vows or prayers) of a definite will and volition, although this side of Its nature is not as fully brought out or as explicitly stated. To quote the words of the *Atvamsaka Sutra*, "It is the One, devoid of all determinations. This body of Dharma has no boundary, no quarters, but it is embodied in all bodies. Though it is a treasury of intelligence, it is void of particularity. The universe becomes, but this body forever remains. It is free from all opposites and contraries, yet is working in all creatures to lead them to Nirvana."

The Nirmanakaya.—There is then, according to Mahayana Buddhism, a highest Being which is the ultimate cause of the universe, and in which all things find their essential origin and significance—the Dharmakaya. But in addition to this, Mahayana teaches that the Dharmakaya does not remain in its absoluteness, but reveals itself in the realm of cause and effect. It then takes a particular form, and becomes a devil, god, man, deva, or even an animal, adapting itself to the conditions and the intellectual development of the people. This may be looked upon as the second body or aspect of the Bhutatathata or Suchness and is termed the Body of Transformation, coming very near to the Christian idea of God the Son, whose duty it is to incarnate Himself as a means of teaching mankind the truth, and thus securing their salvation.

But while the Buddhists thus have an incarnating or transforming aspect or body of the Absolute as have the Christians, the method of incarnation differs widely. In Mahayana it signifies that the one in whom the divine is incarnated is filled with the spirit of the Nirmanakaya, or is guided by its influence. Mahayana may be said to imply, and even explicitly states, that wherever there is goodness and holiness there is a Nirmanakaya. The Avatar then (to give the Buddhist name for the being in whom the divine is incarnated), is both divine and human, or whatever, at the same time. He is divine inasmuch as he reflects or manifests or is one with the Trikaya, yet he is nevertheless distinctly animal, or human, or devic, etc., in this respect being unlike the Christian conception of God the Son and His Incarnation.

The Sambhogakaya.—Corresponding to the Christian Holy Ghost, certainly inasmuch as it is the third person in the Trikaya or trinity, is the Sambhogakaya. Unfortunately, however, although redundant and overemphatic on some points, Mahayana is undecided and ambiguous on others, and the question as to the exact nature of the Sambhogakaya is among these, the different Mahayana authorities all differing among themselves. Suzuki, although himself a Buddhist and one of the foremost authorities on the subject, assumes an agnostic position and declares that he has been unable to fully comprehend its attributes. Lloyd, who derives Mahayana Buddhism from Christianity, asserts that it corresponds to the Christian Resurrected Christ, and M. T. Kirby, although denying this, agrees that the Sambhogakaya and the Holy Spirit are not the same. On the other hand, Anezaki and several other authorities affirm their similarity. I, personally, am led to agree with the latter school, and while the two are by no means identical, yet must they be considered as corresponding more or less closely with one another. The

Sambhogakaya is literally the Body of Bliss, the attaining of or communing with which insures the highest happiness. It is, to use the words of Kashyapa, "the all-excellent Truth, eternal, omnipresent, and immutable."

Additional Trinities.—In addition to the above trinity, popular Buddhism teaches another one consisting of Amida, Kwannzeon or Kwannon, and Seishi. Amida is the abbreviated form of Amitabha (Boundless Light) and is identical with the Dharmakaya, except inasmuch as popular superstition has anthropomorphized Him. Kwannon is a corruption of Avalokitesvara ("the Lord who looks down from on high") who is also the second person of the Thibetan or Lamaistic trinity, and is supposed to have come from Persia. Kwannon was originally conceived as a man, but in China the sex was gradually changed, and we see him sometimes as a man and sometimes as a woman, and frequently as both, one half of the figure being male and the other half female. In Japan the female aspect has tended to predominate. Kwannon is the god or goddess of love and mercy, while Seishi is the personification of wisdom.

Furthermore, philosophic Buddhism of all sects teaches a third trinity composed of (1) the Dharmakaya, or really the Trikaya, (2) Bodhi, and (3) Hridaya. Bodhi is that portion of the Absolute (Bhutatahata) which is manifested in the world of cause and effect, the incarnation of the Universal in the realm of particularity. It is, in a word, the divinity within us and the whole world. Hridaya is that within us which quickens faith, and may therefore be said to correspond even more closely to the Christian Holy Spirit than does the Sambhogakaya. These trinities exist side by side and do not, to the Oriental mind, seem contradictory, all being but aspects of the One Absolute.

Gods and Devas in Mahayana.—But while in one respect Mahayana is essentially a monotheistic faith (for the

Trikaya like the Christian Trinity forms but *one* God), Mahayana is in another sense polytheistic, since in addition to the Bhutatathata and the Trikaya we have a vast number of minor gods and devas, and in the *Paranirvana Sutra* we find the Buddha recorded as saying, "For twelve leagues, Ananda, around the Sala Grove, there is no spot in size even as the pricking of the point of the tip of the hair which is not pervaded by powerful spirits." As a matter of fact, however, the ideas of Buddhism on this point are practically those of Christianity, especially of the Catholic branch, since these gods—more properly devas ("shining ones")—are but the Christian angels under another title. Mahayana declares that these supernatural beings are not all of equal importance or power, just as we find in Christianity the distinction made between angel, archangel, cherubim, seraphim, etc., though for the most part Buddhism is not so categorical. The "gods" in Mahayana, however, vary from evil devils through harmless but mischievous wood-sprites and fairies, up to beneficent devas, etc., until we transcend the limits of personal beings and come upon personifications of great principles (such as Jizo and Kwannon for mercy, etc.).

As we have already noted, Mahayana agrees with Hinayana in teaching that these gods of various kinds are not, in spite of their majesty and glory, things in themselves, and are therefore subject to decay and change, though maintaining a seemingly unchanging existence for perhaps millions of years. As a general thing it may be said that Mahayana Buddhism maintains that there are two orders of evolution, the divine and the human, that both are at present imperfect but that both will finally reach complete enlightenment, though by different stages of development and by different paths of progress.

Buddhahood. The Incarnation and the Atonement.—We have already seen how in a general way the idea of the

incarnation is taught by Mahayana under the doctrine of the Nirmanakaya. This same conception, however, is again met with and more fully developed under the teaching regarding the Buddha. A Buddha according to Mahayana is, as we know, one of those holy beings, who after renouncing Nirvana for himself continues to work for the salvation of the world until the highest possible enlightenment (Buddhahood) is attained. Now to become a Buddha is, in the eyes of the Mahayanist, to become one in essence with the Infinite. Accordingly, a Buddha may be said to be the Trikaya actually incarnate under human guise. In this way, says the Northern Buddhist, was Shakyamuni a reflection of the Dharmakaya, and in this way were all the other great teachers and saviors of humanity, among them Jesus, the Christ.¹³ So much, indeed, are the Trikaya and a Buddha considered to be one that not only do we find a Buddha regarded as a manifestation of the Dharmakaya, but even when the Mahayanist desires to portray the latter, a figure of a Buddha is used.¹⁴

An exact analogy to the Christian idea of the Atonement is, of course, impossible, since the Buddha is supposed to have died a natural death. Nevertheless corresponding closely to it, we have the Buddhist doctrine of the "Turning Over." According to this, the Buddhas (Christ among them) have renounced the fruit of their noble deeds and have turned them over to humanity at large—a sort of imputed righteousness of the Christian Protestant or the supererogation of the Catholics. In this connection

¹³ It is curious to note how Christianity and Buddhism have accorded high honors to each other's founders, Christ in Buddhism being a sort of Buddha, while, on the other hand, Buddha, under another name, is one of the canonized saints of Catholicism. I do not wish to imply, of course, that Mahayana officially declares Christ to have been a Buddha, for Mahayana was formulated before the birth of Jesus, but Mahayana states that all great religious leaders are more or less perfect Buddhas, and modern Mahayana scholars agree in placing Christ foremost among these.

¹⁴ Thus the Daibutsu at Kamakura and others so famous in the West are in reality not the historical Buddha at all, but Amida or the Dharmakaya.

one may quote one of the Buddhist Sutras which says, "In all the world there is not one spot so large as a mustard seed where he [the Buddha] has not surrendered his life for the sake of all creatures."

The Bodhisattvas.—Ranking next below the Buddhas as objects of worship, Mahayana places the Bodhisattvas. Now a Bodhisattva, as has been seen, is one who at some future time will be a Buddha, and being thus an embryo Buddha, is worthy of some respect and worship. One of the chief differences between Hinayana and Mahayana, however, is that the latter teaches that its followers are all in a way Bodhisattvas or Buddhas-to-be, so that in Mahayana to-day, the term is usually applied to those persons who are near the gate of Buddhahood and are therefore particular objects of reverence. As a matter of fact, this doctrine of Bodhisattvahood has been of especial benefit to Mahayana Buddhism, and this for two reasons: first, since it teaches that all men are Buddhas-to-be, it inspires a desire to quickly realize the ideal; and secondly, which is more important, it has better enabled Mahayana to absorb the native religions in the countries which it has invaded, and therefore win admittance for itself. The ancient native worship of all the Far Eastern countries is ancestor-worship, and more especially hero-worship, and this the people are unwilling to surrender, although they are quite willing to worship something in addition. Accordingly we find many of the principal characters in Japanese and Chinese history disguised as Bodhisattvas (in the sense of near-Boddhas) and masquerading under Sanskrit names, thus allowing the ancient native religion and the newcomer, Buddhism, to live amicably together.¹⁵

¹⁵ Christian missionaries in China and Japan have often noted that one of the reasons for the comparatively slow progress of Christianity in those countries has been due to the lack of such an accompanying feature, at least in the Protestant branches.

Heavens and Hells.—One other prominent feature of Mahayana Buddhism in its religious aspect is its acceptance of an infinite number of worlds, both physical and super- and sub-physical. Mahayana does, indeed, teach that the highest bliss (Nirvana) and the deepest misery are purely mental states, irrespective of the place of existence, yet it nevertheless teaches that in addition to innumerable other material planets, there are also countless heavens and hells, varying widely in intensity of suffering and bliss. As in Christianity, the heavens are gained as a reward for meritorious deeds and the hells as punishments for wicked ones, with one important exception however, namely, that although malefactors are unable to enter heaven, virtuous men can enter hell, and often willingly do so in order to help those who are confined there. Unlike Christianity, or at least its orthodox branches, Buddhism teaches universalism, not only in the sense that all beings will finally be freed from the hells, but that even the heavens will at length be emptied since the final goal of all is Nirvana, which is far superior to even the highest heaven.

It would be impossible to even enumerate the principal heavens and hells which the Buddhist philosophers and theologians have evolved, but mention must be made of Jodo, the Western Paradise, the highest heaven according to the Jodo and Shin sects, into which one may be reborn at death by possessing a firm faith in the saving power of Amida during this life, and which leads directly to Buddhahood or Nirvana.

[TO BE CONCLUDED.]

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KYOTO, JAPAN.